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# Report of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) and the World Bank on statistical capacity-building

## Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2016/220 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) and the World Bank on recent initiatives to draw attention to the importance of strengthening statistical capacity, especially in the context of supporting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report, which is submitted to the Statistical Commission for information, highlights progress in statistical capacity-building and addresses emerging topics likely to affect national statistical systems, such as the data challenges of the 2030 Agenda and the data revolution. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

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# Report of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) and the World Bank on statistical capacity-building

## I. Introduction

1. Over the past five years, the focus of political attention on statistics for the development agenda has grown steadily, and continues to grow. Starting with the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, in November-December 2011, Heads of State, ministers and other representatives of developing and developed countries reaffirmed the need for transparent, country-led and country-level results frameworks. The endorsement of the Busan Action Plan for Statistics represents the first instance of endorsement by global political leadership of a plan for official statistics. The Busan Action Plan, which sets out five priority areas for action that would contribute to large and sustainable improvements in statistical capacity, has three principal objectives: (a) to fully integrate statistics in decision-making; (b) to promote open access to statistics; and (c) to increase resources for statistical systems. The endorsement of the Plan has spawned a number of key activities and initiatives, many of which have been documented in previous reports of PARIS21 and the World Bank (E/CN.3/2015/35 and E/CN.3/2016/26).

2. Since the forty-seventh session of the Statistical Commission and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, the political attention directed towards and interest in statistics have continued to remain high in the development agenda. The direct reference in the Sustainable Development Goals to monitoring, evaluation and accountability reinforces the critical role statistics will play in that agenda. The goal of target 17.18 is by 2020, to enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographical location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

3. Although the level of political attention is currently high, meeting the goals and measuring progress towards their achievement will present the data ecosystem with an unprecedented challenge. The goals will require responsive statistical systems with the capacity to track the development progress of countries across a much broader spectrum of development outcomes and processes. The synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda (A/69/700) highlighted the need to enhance national and international statistical capacities to bridge the current data gaps in the context of monitoring and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. The need to provide support to developing countries will continue to grow as the demand for timely quality data increases.

4. The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) and the World Bank believe that we can build on the progress made in filling critical gaps in our understanding of development challenges and performance. With a view to providing momentum for the implementation of the

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[1] the present report provides an overview of recent initiatives undertaken by PARIS21 and the World Bank to draw attention to the importance of strengthening statistical capacity, especially in the context of supporting the sustainable development agenda. The report also highlights progress in statistical capacity-building and addresses emerging topics likely to affect national statistical systems, such as the data challenges posed by the 2030 Agenda and the data revolution.

## II. Progress in improving official statistics in developing countries

5. Improving official statistics in low-capacity environments requires activities on two fronts. First, strengthening of the national statistical system (i.e., effecting "horizontal" improvements to the system) is required for effective and efficient delivery of statistical products. Core activities in support of this goal include strengthening the institutional and legal framework and the overarching data production framework. On the second front, there must be a focus on improving the source data underlying key socioeconomic indicators (i.e., on delivering sector-specific "vertical" improvements to specific survey production and dissemination processes).

6. Examined below are selected efforts across a broad spectrum of supportive activities being engaged in on these two fronts. The aim is not to cover all of the ongoing activities in support of capacity-building in Member States but rather to provide the Statistical Commission with a perspective on the activities selected for consideration.

7. PARIS21 remains the leader in designing and supporting horizontal improvements to statistical systems. The long-standing support to developing countries is being provided through the design, implementation and monitoring of national strategies for the development of statistics. An expert reference group, with representatives from national statistical offices and regional organizations within all regions, has been established to continue the work centred around the guidelines for those national strategies on further addressing specific issues and aligning the guidelines to the latest developments in the context of the international agenda. Additional updates have been made encompassing countries that are undertaking their first national strategy for the development of statistics, fragile States, sectoral strategies, subnational strategies, regional strategies, the costing of the national strategies, the data revolution and the 2030 Agenda. The guidelines are already available in four languages (English, French, Portuguese and Spanish); they have also been translated into Arabic and more recent examples, tools and good practices have been included. A cross-regional workshop on shaping subnational statistical systems to meet the requirements of the Sustainable Development Goals was organized in Paris to further strengthen the subnational component of the national strategy guidelines. The PARIS21 secretariat has directly supported over 26 countries in their work on formulating national strategies for the development of statistics and three regions (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean) in

[1] General Assembly resolution 70/1.

conducting the processes needed to formulate regional strategies for the development of statistics, specifically regarding reviews and evaluations, training and/or preparation of strategic plans. PARIS21 has also continued to raise the awareness of future statisticians and decision makers on the national strategies through lectures in schools of statistics and business administration in the African region.

8. Horizontal improvements require supporting regional activities. PARIS21 has provided continuous support to national and regional statistical development initiatives around the world. In order to strengthen regional economic integration, PARIS21 continues to support regional economic bodies in developing regional strategies for the development of statistics. In 2016, work was initiated with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Caribbean Community to develop and roll out regional statistics strategies. Moreover, PARIS21 remains committed to providing support and guidance to national statistical systems that face greater statistical development challenges such as those of small island developing States and fragile States, which is considered a priority under the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2016, PARIS21 engaged with the national statistical systems, of 18 small island developing States and 18 fragile States. The aim of a cross-regional forum on "Agenda 2030 and small island developing States: strengthening statistical capacity and readiness", which was conducted in Paris in May 2016, was to evaluate the current statistical capacities, readiness levels, experiences and good practices, and common tools and systems in small island developing States in order to address the existing and anticipated data demands arising from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (Samoa Pathway).[2] The forum also focused on how to improve the capacity to respond to data requirements arising from global development agendas.

9. Through its activities, which complement those of PARIS21, the World Bank has continued to provide financial and technical assistance directed towards improving national strategies for better statistics and implementing the priorities set out in such strategies, including through trust funds. Lending operations of the World Bank have continued to provide support for national strategies in countries such as Kazakhstan, Kenya, South Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania. Further lending operations are under preparation in several countries, including Bangladesh, Gabon and Mali. The Statistics for Results Facility Catalytic Fund has provided larger-scale support to eight countries eligible to receive International Development Association (IDA) resources, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building has extended support to several countries (20 new capacity-building projects were approved in 2016) aimed at improving facets of their statistics. Three countries that are members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) have benefited from a regional World Bank-managed statistical capacity-building programme established in 2012.

10. PARIS21, the World Bank and other international organizations are supporting vertical improvements to statistical systems focused on specific indicators, products

[2] General Assembly resolution 69/15, annex.

and services. The World Bank, the multilateral development banks and regional agencies have engaged in various capacity-building and technical assistance activities in different regions designed to enhance country capacity in the areas of national accounts, prices and purchasing power parities. In Asia, the Asian Development Bank organized two regional workshops: in Bangkok in June 2016 and in Manila in September 2016. The Asian Development Bank also supports countries through the construction of supply and use tables and the estimation of subnational purchasing power parities. The CIS Interstate Statistical Committee held a regional meeting on the implementation of the System of National Accounts, 2008 (2008 SNA) in Minsk in April 2016, and a regional meeting on quality analysis of price statistics, also in Minsk in October 2016. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) organized a national accounts seminar in Santiago in November 2016. Two regional workshops were organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in that region: in Istanbul in January 2016 and in Cairo in September 2016. Moreover, ESCWA provided technical assistance to countries in estimating subnational purchasing power parities. The World Bank supported regional partners through the provision of financial and technical assistance in implementing these capacity-building activities.

11. Together with the World Bank, PARIS21 has been highly active over several years in implementing microdata documentation and dissemination work with national statistical offices. The Accelerated Data Programme and the International Household Survey Network programme, implemented by PARIS21, ended in 2015. While funding for the Accelerated Data Programme derived from the Development Grant Facility of the World Bank terminated at the end of 2015, the World Bank continues to support Accelerated Data Programme activities and Survey Network coordination, with financial support from the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID). The World Bank provides a mixture of direct and remote assistance to countries in support of their Microdata Cataloguing Tool (NADA) data catalogues. The World Bank also encourages the embedment of Accelerated Data Programme activities (data documentation and dissemination) in other survey-related activities sponsored by the Bank and other entities. One example in this regard entails support provided for data archiving in the OECS region.

12. The World Bank also continues to focus on the development and improvement of tools and guidelines, including the development of a new metadata editor, improvement of the NADA software and contributions to the R-sdcMicro anonymization package and various guidelines on data management and analysis. Further, the World Bank remains a strong advocate for the use of standards for the documentation of surveys through the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) and participates in the working group geared towards the development of DDI 4 which will ensure relevance for countries. The World Bank continues to support the development of the question bank, with continued support to Rwanda and will extend support to one or two other countries in 2017. The World Bank is also an active contributor to the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys, whose work complements that of the International Household Survey Network. Within the Working Group, the Bank is leading the task team on microdata documentation and dissemination.

13. The ramping up by the World Bank of its support for data production in member countries, most notably for household surveys, complements the activities described above. With funding from the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity-Building, the World Bank is providing financial and technical support to 40 countries. It has also committed to working alongside its partners, most notably national statistical offices and other international organizations, in conducting national surveys that will assess whether people's lives are improving.

14. Although the work undertaken by PARIS21 within the context of the Accelerated Data Programme and the International Household Survey Network is no longer being implemented through programmes within the Partnership, it has been recognized that there is a need to retain and develop a data-related approach to supporting the national strategy for the development of statistics process. PARIS21 has initiated a small cross-regional form of data activity that is lighter and more flexible and responds to country needs as well as the needs of the international community. In 2016 and 2017, the data focus for PARIS21 will be the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and preparation of countries for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. PARIS21, which has adopted a broad approach, is working with various partners including the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the regional commissions, such as the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and ESCWA, in undertaking country-based readiness assessments. In its previous report (E/CN.3/2016/26), PARIS21 reported the development of a data module designed to assist countries in planning their statistical operations (para. 20). The tool, which has evolved, is now called the Advanced Data Planning Tool (ADAPT). The Planning Tool, which is being piloted in six countries, essentially maps national priorities to the Sustainable Development Goals and allows a country to prioritize and budget the data-collection operations required for reporting on the Goals. This costing functionality then interfaces with a planning module of the national strategy for the development of statistics to provide a comprehensive and integrated approach to developing national statistical systems. It is hoped that this process of evaluating a national statistical system will allow for better planning and resource allocation for investments in statistical processes. It is important to note that three of the six pilot countries are also participants in the Statistics Division project, under the ninth tranche of the Development Account, on enhancing national statistical capacity to measure, monitor, assess and report on progress on achieving post-2015 goals and targets for sustainable development. In collaboration with the Statistics Division, PARIS21 has incorporated many of the processes that have been utilized by the Division in its project for evaluating Sustainable Development Goals-related readiness within the context of the Advanced Data Planning Tool. As a result, the Planning Tool may provide a sustainable platform for the extension of assessment to other countries and its replication as a best practice for assessing country readiness for Sustainable Development Goal monitoring.

15. Another work stream of the new data focus that builds upon previous work on the data revolution undertaken by PARIS21 entails the development of the Platform for Innovations in Statistics (PISTA). The aim of the Platform is to accelerate the adoption of innovative approaches in the statistical business processes of national statistical systems by matching collected statistical capacity information on innovations and assessment data using an internationally recognized framework, as

proposed by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) High-level Group for the Modernization of Official Statistics, namely, the Generic Activity Model for Statistical Organizations (GAMSO). A key focus in 2017 for the Platform will be the development of a front-end assessment which will help map identified problems to potential solutions.

16. Any efforts in the areas of planning and production will create value for society only if they are followed by strong data dissemination plans and only if users can understand and use the available information. In this regard, PARIS21 is working to deepen the use of official statistics. In order to increase the knowledge and skills needed to disseminate and use statistics effectively for planning, analysis, monitoring and evaluation, PARIS21 has developed an online data visualization training toolkit. The toolkit documents the recommendations of PARIS21 in respect of undertaking data visualization and communication training programmes on a wide range of topics including: (a) data visualization foundations, (b) the journalist-statistician dialogue on data communication, (c) design of infographics and (d) an analytics module on interactive graphs and maps. The modules of the toolkit were used for training programmes in Botswana, the Gambia, Ghana and Sao Tome and Principe. In Sao Tome and Principe, statisticians and journalists gathered to increase dialogue between national statistical offices and the media. Data visualization workshops, which involved communications officers and spokespersons of line ministries and statisticians from national statistical offices, were held in Botswana and the Gambia. The workshops aimed at promoting statistical literacy, ensuring that statistical materials target the right audience and also ensuring that citizens develop a better understanding of statistical information. In Ghana, the training programme allowed participants to gain expertise in use of the open-source statistical software package R for data visualization and to produce interactive graphs for the website of the statistical office.

17. To measure the progress made on improving statistical literacy, a PARIS21-led task team has developed a first composite indicator to measure global statistical literacy. This indicator will be reported on as part of the Busan Action Plan for Statistics logical framework agreed upon at the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011. Using articles from daily Rich Site Summary (RSS) feeds of the top five national newspapers, the indicator provides an indirect measure of the use of and critical engagement with statistics in the media. The writing of journalists can be viewed as an indicator of a nation's demand for statistical facts and depth of critical analysis. The focus on the top five national newspapers ensures that the indicator reflects to a large extent the nation's consumption of statistical facts and information. The fact that newspaper articles are generally available renders them representative of the literacy of country's population.

18. Another equally important work component involves ensuring that sufficient resources are being directed to statistical systems. The PARIS21 annual Partner Report on Support to Statistics (PRESS) exercise provides a snapshot of ongoing financial support to statistical development across the globe and presents an overview of major trends. Findings from the latest (2016) Partner Report round indicate, inter alia, that (a) the level of support to statistics reached $470 million in calendar year 2014, a figure that is on par with the $448 million in commitments for 2013; (b) the share of official development assistance (ODA) dedicated to statistics was 0.25 per cent in 2014, mirroring the similarly low level (0.24 per cent) in 2013;

(c) demographic and social statistics received the most support ($141 million), followed by economic statistics ($128 million) and general and methodological issues ($104 million); and (d) the top five providers of development cooperation in statistics (Canada; the European Commission/Statistical Office of the European Union (EUROSTAT); the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; the International Monetary Fund (IMF); and the World Bank) continued to provide a large share (72 per cent) of total commitments in 2014.

19. PARIS21 continues to support national statistical offices in launching the Country Report on Support to Statistics (CRESS) at the country level. The Country Report is based on the Partner Report exercise conducted at the international level. The Country Report, which gathers all data related to the funding of the national statistical system whether derived from domestic resources or external aid, has been implemented in six countries (Burundi, Cambodia, the Niger, Nigeria, Uganda and Viet Nam) in 2016. In addition, PARIS21 has brought together national statistical organizations and heads of aid coordination units of 12 African countries in order to facilitate donor coordination and funding of statistical development.

## III. Leveraging the strength of collective actions

20. Delivering on the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — and the data agenda is no exception in this regard — will require collective action. The data needs of developing countries must be championed, and all actors will need to remain as engaged as possible so as to ensure that those needs remain in the forefront. National statistical systems will play a crucial role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the data revolution at the country level. At the same time, multilateral partnerships, cooperation and coordination are elements key to ushering in an effective data revolution at the local, national, regional and international levels. Strengthening existing partnerships and initiating new collaborations will be essential to building capacity and strengthening national statistical systems so as enable them to deliver on the 2030 Agenda and measure implementation. Luckily, traditional partners are beginning to expand their horizons, and a broad range of new development players perceive official statistics as key to delivering on the agenda. These new actors are providing fresh ideas, experiences and technologies which can foster collaborations and new approaches to improving statistics. Various initiatives that can support those new actors within the data ecosystem are already in place.

21. The report entitled "A world that counts: mobilising the data revolution for sustainable development", prepared by the United Nations Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development (IEAG), was issued in November 2014. Pursuant to one of the main recommendations contained in that report, the Statistical Commission agreed that a United Nations World Forum on Sustainable Development Data would be the suitable platform for intensifying cooperation with various professional groups, such as the information technology community, geospatial information managers, data scientists and users, as well as civil society stakeholders. Under the guidance of the Commission and the support of the Statistics Division, the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda

for Sustainable Development, in close consultation with Member States and international partners, including the World Bank and PARIS21, will be leading the discussion on the organization of the World Forum, to be hosted by Statistics South Africa in Cape Town from 15 to 18 January 2017.

22. In addition to drafting a concept note for the organization of the United Nations World Forum, the High-level Group drafted a global action plan for sustainable development data which calls both for a full, active and focused commitment of government, policy leaders and the international community to implement the sustainable development agenda, and for policy leaders to achieve a global pact or alliance which recognizes that funding modernization efforts of national statistical offices is essential to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Both PARIS21 and the World Bank stand ready to support the implementation of the United Nation World Forum and the global action plan for sustainable development data.

23. The World Bank has also responded to the call of the Independent Expert Advisory Group for a new funding stream to support the data revolution for sustainable development. The establishment of an "innovations window" within the Bank's Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity-Building has as its goal the catalysing of innovations in technologies and approach, where needs are continuous or recurrent, and where techniques can be readily adapted to other regions and sectors. In collaboration with the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, the Bank identified and has begun to support about 20 innovations in the production, analysis and use of data for and about development. The projects, which are being implemented across more than 20 countries and five regions, are closely linked with the Sustainable Development Goals and will document learning with respect to which new approaches work and how they can best be applied.

24. The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, which was launched in September 2015, brings together over 150 champions who represent the full range of data producers and users critical to harnessing the data revolution for sustainable development. It is led by Governments, companies, civil society organizations, international organizations, academic institutions, foundations, statistics agencies and data communities from around the world. The Global Partnership aims at sustaining political commitment, aligning strategic priorities and norms, strengthening capacities, fostering innovation and building trust within the current data ecosystem. This international multi-stakeholder initiative will attempt to leverage and amplify current efforts that have the potential to harness the data revolution by encouraging knowledge sharing and learning, mobilizing new and making better use of existing resources, and facilitating collaborations capable of addressing the barriers to producing, accessing and using data towards achievement of sustainable development.

25. As there is still much work to be done on the data agenda, the World Bank and PARIS21, through building on a strong foundation, securing a broader group of partners to provide new ideas and approaches and leveraging political support, will continue to focus their efforts on drawing attention to the importance of strengthening statistical capacity and making the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development a success.